

Carl Olof Jonsson

Sweden

Watchtower Bible and Tract Society
of New York, Inc.

The Writing Committee
117 Adams Street
BROOKLYN
New York 11201
U.S.A.

Åmål, May 20, 1977

Dear Brothers,

A brother has done a thorough study of the Neo-Babylonian period in relation to our present understanding of the "appointed times of the nations". His "treatise", which is written in all honesty and sincere love for truth, has been carefully and critically examined by some able brothers, but it has not been possible to refute the arguments and the conclusion that 587 BCE, not 607, is the correct date for the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. If this conclusion is correct - and it really seems very hard to avoid all the facts presented - the consequences will be far-reaching as re. all things we attach to 1914: Christ's parousia, the establishment of God's Kingdom, the ousting out of Satan, etc.

Included is part II of the treatise, dealing with the Neo-Babylonian chronology. We ask you to read it carefully and give your view on it, as this subject concerns all of us very much.

Keenly looking forward to your answer.

With Christian love to all of you.

Your brother,

Carl Olof Jonsson



TELEPHONE (212) 625-1240

CABLE WATCHTOWER

EG:EI August 19, 1977

Mr. Carl Olof Jonsson
Sweden

Dear Brother Jonsson:

Thank you for your letter of May 20 and the material that you sent along with it. We are sorry that the press of work here has not allowed us to give it the attention we would like up to the present time.

In your letter you mention sending us part II of the prepared treatise, but you did submit a page that is called Part I. Is that the extent of Part I? We mention this because we would be interested in obtaining the entire treatise. If that is the extent of Part I, then we would like to obtain Part III, if that is something that has already been prepared.

Also, we would like to get from you the name and address of the brother who has done the research and prepared this treatise. We are now obtaining some of the reference material mentioned in his footnotes and would like to have his name and address available in case we have any questions to ask. You mention that the material has been examined by a number of brothers. So if there are others that you are in contact with who are involved with this undertaking and who might be able to supply observations if we seek such, we would appreciate knowing of these.

Thank you for your kind attention to the above request.

Your brothers,

Watchtower B. & T. Society
OF NEW YORK, INC.

EG = Gene
Smalley,
Writing Dpt.

Carl Olof Joneson

Sweden

Watchtower Bible and Tract Society
of New York, Inc.

The Writing Committee
117 Adams Street
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New York 11201
U.S.A.

Amål, Sept. 5, 1977

Re. "The Gentile Times Reconsidered"

Dear Brothers,

Thank you greatly for your kind letter of August 19, which I received some days ago. I prepared the above treatise, and as I told you some able brothers have critically examined the manuscript and helped me to make some improvements, especially in Part I. Also, one brother and good friend in U.S.A. has been of great help in correcting my English. I didn't think the namee involved in this research to be important, but as I understand that you intend to investigate this subject carefully and objectively (which is really very gratifying) I am prepared to answer all questione I can, and I will also send the other brothers any queetions you have. Thue we could work on this together and send you all important information and obseervations we might come up with.

Included now is Part I of the manuscript, containing a historical survey of the interpretations of the "Gentile times" from the first century and on to and including C.T. Rueschl. The purpose of this work is to put our present undorestanding of the subject into a hietorical setting and prepare the mind for the information preeented in Parts II and III. Unfortunately, I am still working on Part III. I have a rough draft written in Swedish and also a lot of notes, but the problem is to write it out clearly and understandably in English. Hopofully, it will be ready in October. This part deals with the scriptures containing the 70-year prophecy (Jer. 25, 29; Dan. 9; 2 Chron. 36; Zech. 1, 7, etc.), the Scriptural basis for the calculation of the Gentile times to be a period of 2,520 years, and a discueeion of the 1914 date. Of course, this part of the work just gives some suggested alternatives, and much more research will be needed to clear up all problems. As soon as it is ready, I will send you a copy.

In your letter you mention that you are obtaining some of the reference material mentioned in the footnotes. As I have almost everything of it Xeroxed here at my home, I will gladly send you whatever you need, if this will facilitate your investigation.

With Christian love.

Your brother,

Carl Olof Joneson

Carl Olof Jonseon

Sweden

Watchtower Bible and Tract Society
of New York, Inc.

Writing Dept., Deek EG
117 Adams Street
BROOKLYN
New York 11201

Amál, Dec. 12, 1977.

Re. "The Gentile Times Reconsidered"

Dear Brothers,

I hope that you received Part I of the above treatise as you requested. It was sent to you on Sept. 5, 1977. I have sent you today, under separate cover (air mail), Part III, which I promised to send you during October, but which has been delayed for several reasons. First of all, the last part turned out to be longer than was intended, in spite of the fact that several things have been touched upon very briefly. The correction of the English took some time, too, and besides, the manuscript has been prepared amidst many other responsibilities, both in the congregation and in my secular work.

Several brothers have now examined the treatise, and most of them tend to agree about the conclusions. We hope, therefore, that you will give the evidence and arguments presented a careful and objective examination. Although some of the evidence may seem to be rather critically presented, it should be borne in mind that the criticism has always reference to an idea which clearly seems to be wrong, never to individuals or an association of individuals. The treatise has been written in a humble state of mind, with love for truth and with a view to the best interests for all of us. I hope, therefore, that the argumentation is not interpreted as being provocative, as this has never been intended.

We are all eagerly looking forward to your comments.

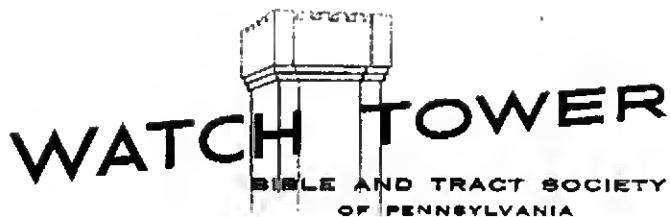
With Christian love to all of you.

Your brother,

Carl Olof Jonseon

PS: On p. 27 of my treatise, the last sentence and footnote 20 referred to a Robert R. Newton, who some years ago exposed Claudius Ptolemy to have "fudged" some of his observations. Perhaps you are aware of the fact that he has now published a book about the matter: The Crime of Claudius Ptolemy, 1977 (John Hopkins University Press). According to Scientific American (Oct. 1977, p. 79f): "Newton has also discovered that a large fraction of the observations Ptolemy attributed to other astronomers is not material he has preserved from the past but material he has forged. ... Moreover, Ptolemy's forgery may have extended to inventing the length of reigns of Babylonian kings." Thus the critical attitude taken in the Aid book to Ptolemy is surely justified. "It is clear," Newton concluded his book, "that no statement made by Ptolemy can be accepted unless it is confirmed by writers who are totally independent of Ptolemy on the matters in question." This is exactly what has been done in Part II of my treatise, as the Neo-Babylonian chronology is established by several lines of evidence independent of Ptolemy's canon. These show Ptolemy's list to be correct with respect to the Neo-Babylonian period.

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TELEPHONE (212) 626-1240



CABLE WATCH

124 COLUMBIA HEIGHTS, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11201, U.S.A.

GEA:ESB

January 17, 1978

Carl Olof Jonsson

Sweden

Dear Brother Jonsson:

To hand is your letter of December 12, 1977, and also the treatise that you have prepared entitled "The Gentile Times Re-considered."

We have not had the opportunity of examining this material as yet, as other urgent matters are occupying our attention. However, we will look into this material when we have the opportunity.

We appreciate your sincerity in wanting to set forth your views. However, no matter how strong the argumentation may be in support of these views, they must, for the present, be regarded as your personal viewpoint. It is not something that you should talk about or try to advance among other members of the congregation. We mention this because you state in your letter that several brothers have examined your treatise and that "we are all eagerly looking forward to your comments."

As you can appreciate, what you state in your treatise amounts to a radical departure from the present understanding of chronology by Jehovah's Witnesses. We are sure that you can appreciate that if changes of importance are made they should be made in an orderly way, even as was the case in the first century, with central direction being given. (Acts 15:1, 2) We are also sure that you appreciate that for individuals to advance and advocate such changes would have, not a unifying effect, but a divisive one producing confusion. We mention this to you in view of the fact that the treatise you sent contains a statement on the front page describing it as "prepared by Jehovah's Witnesses, for Jehovah's Witnesses." To say that something is "prepared by Jehovah's Witnesses" implies that it has the sanction of Jehovah's Witnesses as a body, and we are sure you realize that this is not the case with the treatise at hand. This could give a false impression and we are confident that this is not your desire. You can be assured that your views will be examined by responsible

Carl Olof Jonsson

January 17, 1978

Page II

brothers, and that if doctrinal change should be made at some time it will come through the proper channels. This is important in preserving the unity of Jehovah's organization.

It is hoped that you will observe the counsel supplied above. In due course we hope to look into your treatise and evaluate what is contained therein.

Please be assured of our warm love and best wishes.

Your brothers,

Watch Tower B.G.T. Society

For the Writing Committee
of the Governing Body

*GEA = W.L.
Barry,
Governing Body*

Carl Olof Jonseon

Sweden

Watchtower Bible and Tract Society
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Writing Dept., Deek GEA
117 Adams Street
BROOKLYN
New York 11201

Åmål, February 22, 1978

Re. "The Gentile Times Reconsidered"

Dear Brothers,

I appreciated your letter of January 17 and your promise that my treatise will be examined by "responsible brothers". Surely we all realize the importance of this matter, as it does not concern some little detail only, but the "corner-stone" in our eschatological building. Therefore, as the search for and spreading of truth is the primary reason for our existence as a movement, this subject cannot be handled indifferently or postponed to some indeterminate future. A cook who was notified of the evidence indicating that some of the food he prepares seems to be poisoned would no doubt immediately begin to examine the matter and in the meantime he would be careful not to have the suspected food being brought in to the guests. Doesn't the same hold true of the spiritual food, too?

You evidently misunderstood the statement I made in my former letter that "several brothers have now examined the treatise". I am not talking about or trying to advance the evidence presented in the treatise among members in the congregation, as I am well aware of the disturbing effects this could have on the brothers in general. Love for truth and the brother does not cause divisions and confusion, but as you know many brothers tend to regard the things written in the Watchtower publications as nearly inspired by God and therefore above critical examination in the light of the Scripture. (Acts 17:11) I am sure you agree that such an attitude is very unfortunate and should be opposed. Because of this attitude open inquiry has to be avoided, as it time and again is met with irrational reactions. The treatise has been examined by six knowledgeable brothers in Sweden (none of whom belong to our congregation) and about eight brothers in USA and other countries. But as it is probably impossible for everyone involved to keep this delicate question secret, I think it will be spread around more and more as time goes by. There is some evidence of this already. This could in time cause a lot of trouble, but I am sure you will have cleared up the matter before that.

Another thing you comment upon is the statement on the front page that the treatise is "written by and for Jehovah's witnesses". As some brothers have been of great help in examining and correcting the treatise and have given several good suggestions and amendments, I felt it all right to state that the treatise was the result of the research of several witnesses, and also that it was intended for Jehovah's witnesses, not for our opponents who could use it as a powerful weapon against us. None of the brothers who have read the treatise has hitherto misunderstood this statement, concluding that the work "has the sanction of Jehovah's Witnesses as a body". But I understand your feelings about this detail and have changed the statement on the front page of my original. Enclosed is a copy of the new front page which you may exchange for the old one.

Some other minor details, too, have been changed in the treatise, especially some statements about Ptolemy which have been corrected in accordance with the evidence presented by R. R. Newton in his book The Crime of Claudius Ptolemy (see the PS in my former letter). These changes do not

change any of the lines of evidence presented against the 607 BCE date, but have been done for the sake of exactness. Another correction refers to footnote 21, page 63, where "8 months" should read "4 months" and "10 months" should read "2 months". The changed pages are enclosed so you may exchange them.

With warm Christian love.

Your brother in the service of Jehovah and his truth,

Carl Hoffman —

Carl Olof Jonsson

Sweden

Albert D. Schroeder
Watchtower Bible and Tract Society
of New York, Inc.
Writing Dept.
117 Adams Street
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New York 11201

Åmål, December 6, 1978

Dear Brother,

I suppose that you are aware of (and probably have read) my treatise The Gentile Times Reconsidered, which I sent to the Writing Department last year. This treatise presented a series of arguments demonstrating that Jerusalem was desolated by the Babylonians in 587 B.C.E., not in 607 B.C.E. as we have held hitherto. Although I have not yet received an answer with an appraieement of the evidence presented in the treatise, I understand and have been informed that one reason why the evidence has been disregarded is the importance you attach to a recent work by Robert R. Newton entitled The Crime of Claudius Ptolemy (Baltimore 1977), and especially the statement by the reviewer of this book in Scientific American of Oct. 1977, p. 80, to the effect that "Ptolemy's forgery may have extended to inventing the length of reigns of Babylonian kings". This statement, which was also quoted in the Watchtower of Dec. 15, 1977, p. 747, may be completely disproved, as is shown in the enclosed paper (a table with short comments) on The Reigns of Babylonian Kings: A Comparison of the Canon of Ptolemy with Older Sources, prepared early this year.

There are two reasons, brother Schroeder, why I am approaching you personally in this matter: 1) One of the district overseers here in Sweden, brother Rolf Sveneson, told me that you are something of an expert on chronology at the headquarters, and 2) he also told me about a meeting that you held in Europe early in August with a number of prominent brothers. At that meeting you told the audience;

- A. that a campaign now is going on in USA both from the outside (the Seventh Day Adventists) and from the inside of our movement in order to overthrow our present 607 BCE - 1914 CE chronology,
- B. that the Society has no intention at all to abandon the chronology in its present form,
- C. that some of the old documents referred to by these "attackers" have been proven to be forged (Ptolemy's king list was mentioned) and that the Society is following this matter with the greatest interest, and
- D. that there is nothing in the arguments proposed by these "attackers" that is new to the Society.

This was, of course, very interesting information to me, and I would like to make some comments on it and ask you some questions, which I hope you will be kind enough to answer.

A. The campaign. Is it possible that you regard the research I have done on the Neo-Babylonian chronology and the evidence I have presented to the Writing Department as a part of the above-mentioned campaign? At least it seems that brothers in leading positions here in Sweden have understood your statement that way. I have been told by one district overseer that it is against the wishes of the Society to become involved in research of the kind I have done, that the Society does not need it, that a brother on losland recently was disfellowshipped because of his research, etc. Warnings of similar kind are also presented from the platform. At a circuit assembly I visited some weeks ago another district overseer spoke ironically of some "presumptuous brothers", who, acting as "small prophets", have worked out "their own little chronology" in opposition to the Society. Another brother, who belongs to the branch office committee, in an address he gives to the congregations, devotes considerable time to warnings against "dangerous elements" in the congregations, among which elements he especially refers to brothers who have no faith in the chronology of the Society. I think you can guess what kind of climate that develops from utterances such as these - a climate of fear, suspiciousness, etc., where you time and again find that some brother has interpreted a harmless remark you have made in a way that may be turned against you.

My research was started more than ten years ago as a result of questions put to me by a man I studied the Bible with. Gradually it dawned upon me that the generally accepted chronology for the Neo-Babylonian period has very strong evidences in support of it. I tried very hard to refute them, but could not, and at last I had to accept them. After having discussed the evidence with some of my closest friends (personally or by letter) for some time, it was decided that they should be presented to the Society. Consequently, I prepared the treatise The Gentile Times Reconsidered and sent it to the Writing Department. This work has been done with the greatest seriousness and in all sincerity. How tragically, then, to observe how a situation develops, where the attention is drawn away from the question raised - the validity of the 607 BCE date - and directed to the person who raised it, and he - not the question - is regarded as the problem! This is really distressing. How is it possible that a situation of this kind develops in our movement?

B. Abandon the chronology or not? I can readily understand the hesitation to abandon the chronology, even if the evidences against it are very strong. Abandoning the 607 BCE - 1914 CE calculation would have very serious consequences for our present understanding of the events since 1914 (as I also demonstrated in Part III of the treatise). And I can also understand the argument used by brother Fred Ruek to a close friend of mine, who recently visited the headquarters and discussed the chronology with him, viz., that "we cannot just take away the 1914 date, if we have nothing to put in its place". On the other hand, love for truth has been one of the most important earmarks of our movement and surely this has been one of the reasons why God has blessed this movement in the past. Those loving the truth will have no problems with even big changes, as they realize that the changes are made in order to conform to truth and facts. I know many brothers (who know nothing of the evidences against the 607 BCE date), who now have increasing problems with our present chronology, just because they see the 1914 date becoming more and more distant and the generation fixed to it extended to the breaking-point, and the critical decade of the 1970s (with the 1975 date) soon behind us. There is a

widsspread and growing feeling that something is basically wrong, and this is, surely, our chronology. - Do we really need "something to put in its place"? To a Christian the Bible and what is contained therein is enough as a foundation for his faith. And he finds no 607 BCE or 1914 CE dates there. The first Christians had no such dates, and yet what they had was enough for them. When they asked Jesus about the time when the kingdom of God would be set up, he did not give them any dates or chronological calculations, and he did not refer them to Daniel, chapter four. He just told them that "It does not belong to you to get knowledge of the times (kairos) and seasons which the Father has placed in his own jurisdiction". - Acts 1:6,7. Shouldn't this statement be enough to put in place of the 607-1914 calculation?

C. Forged documents? I was really surprised to hear that some of the documents establishing the chronology of the Neo-Babylonian period have been proven to be forged. I asked myself: If this is true, why wasn't I notified of it as an answer to my treatise? This would surely have been very helpful to me. I know nothing of such forgeries, although I have studied these documents for years and been following the discussions of them in the scientific journals. But soon I realized that the "documents" referred to could only be Ptolemy's king list (which I did not use as an evidence in my treatise). And perhaps you did not say that this king list has been proven to be forged (as it has not), but only that it could be proved. Brother Rusk, too, in his above-mentioned discussion with my friend, referred to the possible invention of Ptolemy's king list, and did not seem to know anything about other forgeries. So I draw the conclusion that this list is the "documents" referred to. Could you confirm this?

Ptolemy's king list was not invented, as I have demonstrated in the enclosed paper on The Reigns of Babylonian Kings, in which Ptolemy's canon is compared with the reigns of the Babylonian kings as found in other and much older documents. Ptolemy evidently got his information from older sources, available to him. On the other hand, R. R. Newton seemed to have demonstrated that Ptolemy had forged many of the astronomical observations attached to this king list in his Almagest. How could it be possible that these observations were forged, if the king list was not? In order to get an answer to this question, I sent my paper on The Reigns of Babylonian Kings to Mr. Newton and asked some questions. I also asked some questions about the solar eclipse in the eponymy of Bur-Sagale, mentioned in the eponym canon.

Mr. Newton is no expert on Assyro-Babylonian chronology and history, which he also readily admits in his book The Crime of Claudius Ptolemy: "I have not attempted to study the evidence available from sources other than Ptolemy for earlier years", that is, before Nebuchadnezzar (p. 375). This also became evident in our correspondence. Although he had examined the astronomical diary VAT 4956 and confirmed the date earlier established for Nebuchadnezzar's 37th regnal year (568/567 BCE), and thus also could fix Nebuchadnezzar's first regnal year to 604/603 BCE, he knew practically nothing about the old documents on which the Assyro-Babylonian chronology is founded. This is clearly demonstrated in his discussion of the Assyrian eponym canon, where he makes a very gross blunder. (Unfortunately, it seems as if the discussion of the eponym lists in the Aid book proceeds from the same mistake, giving the impression that the placing of Sennacherib's eponymy in his 18th regnal year is an invention by modern historians, while this information is given in the eponym lists themselves! p. 326:4,5)

In his answer, Newton admits that "the king list may be genuine", and by this he does not only mean that it was not invented (because this is very apparent from my table), but also that it may be correct. This is two different things: The canon was not invented, but took its information from older sources. But does it agree with facts? The answer to this question is of course dependent on the question if the older sources agree with facts. And this was what I demonstrated in my treatise, where

I presented several lines of independent evidence, demonstrating that the accepted chronology of the Neo-Babylonian period is correct. There are also other lines of evidence, not included in the treatise, which fix the length of the Neo-Babylonian period, but as it covers different segments of the period and not the whole period I did not include it in the treatise. One of these segments, for example, covers the period from the 16th year of Nabopolaeser to the accession-year of Nabonidus. A document from the reign of Nabonidus states that this period was 54 years (610-556 BCE). - I enclose Newton's answer and also a copy of my answer to his letter. He did not answer my last letter, evidently because he could not refute it.

D. Nothing new? Of course you could say so in August, 1978. But when you received Part II of my treatise in May, 1977, didn't you find anything new in it? What about the Harran stele, Nabon. H 1, B? This stele was discovered in 1956, and a translation of it was published by Gadd in 1958. Did you know anything about this stele when the Aid book was published in 1971? I draw the conclusion that you didn't, because if you did, you wouldn't have referred to the damaged copy of the same stele, discovered in 1906, without mentioning the stele with the complete chronological information on it, discovered 50 years later. To discuss the damaged stele in order to demonstrate how little we know about the Neo-Babylonian chronology would not have been honest, if you knew about the new stele in good condition from 1956. As I am convinced that the one who wrote that article was an honest man, I must conclude that he didn't know of the new stele from 1956. To me it also seems very unlikely that you knew anything about the Egibi-tablets and the strong evidence they give for the Neo-Babylonian period, or the evidence from the contemporary chronology of Egypt, independently founded upon a series of Apis-stelae. The three kinds of evidence mentioned above are all contemporary with the Neo-Babylonian period, they are all independent of each other, and yet they all agree as to the length of the Neo-Babylonian period. They are the strongest evidence we have today as respecting the length of the Neo-Babylonian period. Yet, none of them have ever been mentioned in any of our publications, neither in the Aid book nor elsewhere. If this evidence was "nothing new", it seems very curious to me that it has never been discussed or mentioned anywhere, and no attempts have been made to refute it. Are you sure that nothing of this was new when the Aid book was prepared, or when you got my treatise in 1977?

One objection to my arguments against the 607 BCE date is that they are all built upon "worldly" or "profane" sources. To this it is only to point out that a very great part of our present "Bible chronology", too, is built solely on "worldly" sources, viz., the more than 2,500 years from 539 BCE to 1978 CE. And besides, exactly the same kind of evidence (= profane or worldly documents) that makes the 539 BCE date an "absolute date" or a "pivotal date" in our present chronology also makes the 587 date (as the 18th date of Nebuchadnezzar, when Jerusalem was destroyed) an "absolute date" or a "pivotal date". The fact is that our whole "Bible chronology", which is fixed to the 539 BCE date, for that reason is solely founded upon "worldly" sources! Every argument put forth against the documents on which the 587 BCE date is built also hits the 539 BCE date with the same force, and, indirectly, also the 607 BCE date, as that date is derived from the 539 BCE date! This is the real situation, and that is why we should accept the 587 BCE date instead of the 607 BCE date as the correct date for the destruction of Jerusalem.

I am confident that you won't take offence at my outspokenness, but will examine the enclosed material with an open mind. I am sure that I have the best thoughts of all of you and, in spite of the present difficulties, am praying that Jehovah will continue to lead us all into his truth more fully and to show Christian love to each other. I am looking forward to your answer. Your brother,

TELEPHONE (212) 688-1840



CABLE WATCHTOWER

117 ADAMS STREET, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11201, U.S.A.
EW:ESC

December 22, 1978

Carl Olof Jonsson

Sweden

Dear Brother Jonsson:

We are writing to inform you that your letter of December 6, with enclosure, addressed to Brother A. D. Schroeder, has been safely received and has been passed to the Writing Department. We are not at the moment making any reply or comment on the points raised in your letter.

Please be assured of our best wishes.

Your brothers,

Watchtower B. & T. Society
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EW = E.C.
Ciritty.
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CABLE WATCHTOWER

117 ADAMS STREET, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11201, U.S.A.

EW:ESE

January 1, 1979

Carl Olof Jonsson

Sweden

Dear Brother Jonsson:

Further to our letter of December 22, there are a few comments that we would like to make.

We wish to advise you that we are not disregarding or dismissing what you have written, either in your letter with enclosures addressed to Brother Schroeder or in your previous correspondence sent to us. It is evident that you have done much research and we have no desire to imply that you are not conscientious in your presentation and motives. You clearly feel the secular evidence found is sufficient to reach a positive conclusion. We do not share that firm conviction and, therefore, believe it is better for the present to reserve our judgment.

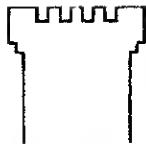
With regard to doing research on the subject, as mentioned on page 2 of your letter, this is entirely a matter for personal decision and responsibility. It certainly would not be true to say that anyone has been disfellowshiped because of doing research. However, whether or not as a result of doing this, if anyone keeps on pushing his views on a certain subject to the extent of causing public controversy and dispute, and hence disunity, then in the interests of the brothers, it requires that some action be taken. If there is any question about a certain matter, then, until that can be settled and made plain to all beyond any reasonable dispute, it is better to show consideration by not making a big issue over it, giving rise to dissension and debate.--1 Cor. 1:10, 11.

We much appreciate the closing expressions in your letter and assure you of our warm Christian love.

Your brothers,

Watchtower B. & T. Society
OF NEW YORK, INC.

EW =
E.C. Chitty,
Writ. Dept.



WATCHTOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC.

CABLE WATCHTOWER

117 ADAMS STREET, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11201, U.S.A. PHONE (212) 623-1240
EJ:ESC

February 28, 1980

Carl Olof Jonsson

*EJ = C. Chain,
Writ. Dept.*

Sweden

Dear Brother Jonsson:

We are sorry for the long delay in sending a further reply to you with regard to the material you submitted to the Society in 1977 on the subject of ancient chronology. For some years before receiving the information that you provided and even during the years since receiving it the Society has continued to gather materials on the subject of Biblical and secular chronology. We appreciate what you have submitted and have read it and thought about it. In no way has it been forgotten or merely shoved aside as if of no importance. We are also in possession of your material entitled "The Gentile Times Reconsidered." This too has been read and will be subject to further consideration in the future.

We recognize that the research represented by the material that you have given us has required considerable time. Also we recognize that much time and effort went into writing up the information in the form in which you submitted it to us. Since you are quite evidently interested in promoting a better understanding of the inspired Word of God and have put forth so much effort to make a contribution to that end, we feel that it is only fair to make some comments about your material. We would like, though, to mention two problems that present themselves: (1) We do not feel that it would be proper for us to enter into point-for-point debate over every detail where we disagree or remain unconvinced about conclusions to which you have come. This would be out of harmony with the spirit of what is said about "questionings" and "debates" at 1 Timothy 6:3-5; (2) the material that you sent us with regard to chronology in itself covers scores of typewritten pages, and the information entitled "The Gentile Times Reconsidered" runs to 107 typewritten pages. Since those who handle correspondence for the Society have a considerable load of work to process each day, it is neither possible nor would it be fair to others for us to enter into lengthy correspondence with you. We do not mean that any answer you choose to give to this letter would be ignored. Whatever you say will be read and carefully considered. But the Society cannot enter into lengthy and repeated correspondence on these matters. As in the case of any subject, all we can do is endeavor to gather the best and most reliable materials and to draw conclusions from them that harmonize wholly with the inspired Word of God.

We will, however, make an effort to offer a few comments with regard to some points made in the materials that you sent to us. First of all, as to the Canon of Ptolemy, the Society cannot accept Ptolemy's figures for Babylonian kings as an unerring guide for the chronology of that period. The Canon of Ptolemy is composed basically of two things—history and astronomical information. Ptolemy had at his disposal some historical documents that gave the lengths of reign for Babylonian kings and he also had at his disposal astronomical information. When he gives information about eclipses, that information

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is correct. But when he synchronizes that information with years of certain kings, that is another matter. There is no evidence that Ptolemy had at his disposal documents contemporary with the Neo-Babylonian period. Possibly he had access to certain "astronomical diaries" that give the name and year of a certain king along with observations of planetary positions during the year. However, all of such astronomical diaries that have been preserved down to our day date from the Seleucid Era. They are copies from earlier documents. The earlier documents themselves may have been copies from originals written during the Neo-Babylonian period. Ptolemy's figures for Babylonian kings agree with other figures available from such copies of astronomical diaries written during the Seleucid Era.

An example is the tablet known as VAT 4956. It appears from the information that you sent us that you are in possession of the article about (and translation into German of) this tablet provided by Paul Neugebauer and Ernst Weidner in 1915. You will note that on page 38 of the German text (as we translate into English) the following: "Our copy of this observation text was not made in the year -567/66 itself. It is rather a copy of a much later time." The authors also point out: "Additionally attention is called to the signature . . . which leads to the first line of the following tablet dealing with Nebuchadnezzar's 38th year. Our tablet therefore belongs to a collection of astronomical observation texts which probably covered a long period of time and were designed to serve as a basis for theoretical astronomical work." It is true that on page 39 the same authors state: "As far as contents are concerned, of course, our copy is a true picture of the original." While this opinion may be correct for the astronomical information on the tablet, it does not necessarily hold true regarding its historical details. While the astronomical information on this tablet points to the year -567/66 (568-567 B.C.E.), attributing the tablet to the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar may be simply the opinion of a scribe assembling and dating "a collection of astronomical observation texts," working at a "much later" period, who came to accept historical data that corresponds with that later presented by Ptolemy.

We do not mean by this, Brother Jonsson, that the Society views all of Ptolemy's figures as incorrect. For example, Ptolemy allows 43 years for Nebuchadnezzar; and this is confirmed by the Bible itself.

As for chronicle texts that have survived down to our time from ancient Babylon, these cover only relatively small parts of the Neo-Babylonian kingdom. For example, we have information from chronicle texts for the first eleven years of Nebuchadnezzar and for his 37th year, for the third year of Neriglissar, but nothing from Amel Marduk and Labashi Marduk. Only part of the reign of Nabonidus is covered. While the years of Babylonian kings named in these chronicle texts do not contradict the Canon of Ptolemy, in themselves they are not sufficient to constitute full and absolute verification of all of Ptolemy's figures.

What, then, about the Nabonidus Harran Stele designated NABON H 1, B. It appears from your correspondence that you have a copy of the article about this document published in Anatolian Studies, Vol. 8, 1958. We note that Ptolemy's Canon allows for the period between Assyrian King Esarhaddon and Nabopolassar of Babylon a period of 42 years. The Nabonidus Harran stele gives 42 years

for Assurbanipal, who succeeded Esarhaddon. But before Nabopolassar this inscription presents a 3-year reign for a certain king Assur-etillu-ili. And there is a contract tablet dated to the fourth year of Assur-etillu-ili. C. J. Gadd, translator into English of NABON H 1, B, points out a further problem: "This difficulty is much increased when the reign of Sin-sar-iskun is also taken into consideration, for there has appeared to be sufficient indication that he too was king of Assyria before the accession of Nabopolassar Nothing is known about the relations of Assur-etillu-ili and Sin-sar-iskun, both of whom were successors of Assurbanipal, one, probably both, being his son. The former is shown by contracts to have ruled for at least four, the latter for at least seven, years."

The same author also states: "In the present state of our knowledge it is hardly worthwhile elaborating conjectures to account for these seeming discrepancies: (a) that the Harran inscription appears to require about two years more between the death of Assurbanipal and the accession of Nabopolassar than our evidence, including the Ptolemaic Canon, puts at our disposal; (b) that the reign of Sin-sar-iskun, which otherwise should have begun before that of Nabopolassar, is now seemingly excluded from the brief interval then occurring." These chronological difficulties presented by contemporary cuneiform texts as well as the Canon of Ptolemy have engaged the attention of scholars. In view of the facts, we feel neither compelled nor inclined to view the figures in the Canon of Ptolemy as an infallible guide in matters of chronology.

With regard to business documents such as are presented by the Egibi House tablets, we know that there are tablets for all years of Neo-Babylonian kings represented in the Canon of Ptolemy. But can we say without doubt that the tablets from Egibi House represent every year of every king of that period? Can we say with certainty that none of those kings ruled during years not represented by tablets from the Egibi House? Surely we cannot. For example, during the reign of Darius I there are no records from Egibi House for years 7, 32, 33, 34 and 36. But we would not be warranted in saying that this king did not rule during those years simply on the basis of there being no tablets. We cannot say with certainty that Neo-Babylonian kings ruled only during years represented by such tablets.

As to the synchronism of Egyptian chronology with Babylonian kings and also rulers of Judah, the lengths of reign that can be verified by stelae do not extend beyond the time of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. We see no reason to disagree with the figures that synchronize with kings in Babylon and Judah before the time of Nebuchadnezzar. However, for the reigns after that time, for instance, for the reigns of Amasis and Psammetichus III there is some disagreement in historical sources. With regard to Amasis, according to one source, Manetho attributes to him 44 years. However, Syncellus quotes Manetho as giving him only 42 years. The highest date for Amasis known on monuments is year 44. Interestingly, though, Diodorus of Sicily (I, 68) attributes to this king 55 years. With regard to Psammetichus III, Manetho attributes to him a rulership of six months. However, the highest date available from monuments for this king is year 2; and a document mentioned in the publication Notice des papyrus démotiques archaïques (by Revillout) gives four years of rule to a King Psammetichus that the author claims is Psammetichus III. Hence, some historical sources for the kings Amasis and Psammetichus III give more years

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than the lengths of reign commonly accepted. As to the years when Psammetichus reigned, some scholars (Unger, Wiedemann, Petrie) state that this king reigned in 526 and 525 B.C.E., whereas other scholars (Krall and Spiegelberg) prefer the years 528 and 527 B.C.E. In view of this, we can say with certainty that the chronology for the 26th dynasty of Egypt absolutely confirms the figures in the Canon of Ptolemy for the Neo-Babylonian period? Surely we cannot make such a claim.

We note that in the material about "The Gentile Times Reconsidered," beginning on page 51, you advance the opinion that the Babylonian captivity began in the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar. As one line of evidence for this you cite the Babylonian chronicle as published by Wiseman, which includes this statement: "At that time Nebuchadrezzar conquered the whole area of the Hatti-country." However, the translation that appears in Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles, by A. K. Grayson does not have "Hatti-country" in this place, but rather "Ha[ma]th." In a note Grayson says: "Kur Ha-[ma-a]-tu: a restoration Ha-[at]-tu is to be rejected on the grounds that otherwise it appears Hat-tu in this chronicle."

According to Josephus, as acknowledged in your material, at Carchemish Nebuchadnezzar "occupied all Syria, with the exception of Judah." With this the Scriptures agree. Jeremiah states that Nebuchadnezzar took Jews into captivity "in the seventh year," "in the eighteenth year" and in "the twenty-third year" of his reign. (Jer. 52:28-30) The fact that Nebuchadnezzar took "heavy tribute" from Hatti-land does not have to mean that the seventy years of captivity to Babylon had begun. Gentile kings previous to Nebuchadnezzar had also taken tribute from Judah.

Once again, Brother Jonsson, we express appreciation for the hard work that you have done on the material that you have sent to us. There are many valuable observations in it, both from the Scriptures and from secular sources and we will keep it on file for reference. However, at present the Society has no plans for publishing anything additional or different from what already has been published on this subject.

Nevertheless, as information continues to flow in, it may be that something of this type can be done in the future. Once again, thank you for the considerable time and effort that you have put forth in order to promote a clearer understanding of a most difficult subject. We send our love and greetings.

Your brothers,

Watchtower B. & T. Society
OF NEW YORK, INC.

Carl Olof Jonsson

Sweden

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March 31, 1980

Dear Brothers:

Your letter of February 28, 1980, arrived safely about two weeks ago. First, I would like to tell you that I appreciated it, and especially the way in which it was written: discussing - in a spirit of brotherly love and respect - the question of chronology as such, not the questioner, his motives (if he is illogical, apocatastatic, presumptuous, etc.), his right to examine the subject and question previous conclusions, his right to share his findings with his friends and ask for their reactions, and so on - as if this was the problem. However, when a fire-alarm starts to hoot, it would not be relevant to conclude that something has gone wrong with the alarm and that a closer examination of it in order to bring it to silence would solve the problem. I find it encouraging that you, in your most recent letter, turn your whole attention to the "fire", so to speak.

I appreciated also very much the initiative taken by Brother Bengt Haneen in visiting me last December for a private talk, after which he wrote to you about my situation.

Of course, I understand quite well that it is impossible for you to enter into a lengthy correspondence with me on the subject of chronology and debate over every detail in my treatise ("The Gentile Times Reconsidered"). On the other hand, I do not hesitate to answer your letter, partly because the points you brought up against my conclusions are clearly invalid, which is easy to demonstrate, and partly because I will present two additional lines of evidence to the ones earlier presented in the treatise against the 607 BCE date. I am not doing this because I find pleasure in "questionings" and "debates", or because I want to prove that I am right and you are wrong. Who is right is not important. What is right is important. Truth and facts belong to all who love them. That's why I feel I should answer your letter.

A true scientist (and any truth-lover, for that matter) invites corrections and friendly criticism, as that will give him opportunity to correct errors and bring his thoughts closer to the truth. I take it for granted that this is your attitude, too, and as you write in your letter that "whatever you say will be read and carefully considered", I feel confident that the criticism and additional information offered on the following pages will be carefully examined by you without preconceived opinions. Openness to truth, courage to look into and face the truth, and readiness to accept the truth when it is clearly seen, no matter what it turns out to be - these are the marks of a truth-lover, of a true Christian. It would be foolish to spend a lot of time and energy on trying to defend, to the very least, a certain idea or interpretation, only because there is nothing to put in its place, if all the evidences we have indicate it has

nothing to do with raality. If, nevertheless, such an idea or interpretation is published, preached and spread out to millions of people and is presented, not only as a theory, but as a basic Christian truth, the rejection of which is said to arouse the wrath of God, then this would be more than foolish. It would be a grave sin, for which Jehovah would hold us responsible.

The points you brought up will be discussed one by one under different headings. If you choose to write some lines and tell me what you think and how you feel about the information below, this would be much appreciated. If you believe I could be of any help in your further investigation of this subject, perhaps by giving further information on some detail or sending some material you need, feel free to ask me.

I regret that this letter with the discussion on the following pages has become so long. Yet, I have tried to explain things as briefly as possible. I had intended to add some additional information on the subject, too, but perhaps that could be done in another letter in the future, if necessary.

Brothers, thank you once again for your kind letter! With Christian love.

Your brother,



Carl Olof Joneson

Enclosure:

1. Correspondence Joneson-Sache.
2. Some pages from J. Oatee's article in Iraq XXVII, 1965.

THE CANON OF PTOLEMY

Your first comments concern the Canon of Ptolemy, and your statement that his Canon cannot be regarded as an "unerring guide" for the chronology of the Babylonian era is, of course, correct. This was basically what I said in my treatise, too. Ptolemy's figures have been accepted by modern historians, not because his Canon in itself is regarded as an unerring guide for the chronology of the Babylonian and later periods, but because (1) his figures have been confirmed by a number of much older sources for the chronology of that time, some of which are contemporary with the Neo-Babylonian era, and because (2) in his great work Almagest he establishes the chronology presented in his Canon as an absolute chronology with the aid of a large amount of astronomical material gathered from ancient sources. His calculations have been checked and verified by modern astronomers, and more than that: Modern discoveries of ancient astronomical tablets, especially so-called astronomical "diaries", have enabled modern astronomers and historians to establish the absolute chronology of almost the whole period covered by the Canon of Ptolemy, independently of Ptolemy and his eclipses, thus giving an independent confirmation of his chronology. So what matters today is not the Canon of Ptolemy, but the older documents and sources that have confirmed it: astronomical diaries, contract tablets, chronicles, king lists, contemporary Babylonian and Egyptian stelae, etc. - and the Bible.

I noticed with interest your statement about Ptolemy, that "When he gives information about eclipses, that information is correct" (p. 1). One of the ancient eclipses he records is dated to the 5th year of Nabopolassar (Almagest, V 14, p. 340), identified by modern astronomers with the lunar eclipse of April 22, 621 BCE. This, of course, fixes Nebuchadnezzar's 1st year to 604 BCE (as his father Nabopolassar ruled for 21 years), and his 18th year (when he desecrated Jerusalem) to 587 BCE. I noticed some years ago that the Aid book makes an attempt to identify this eclipse with one that took place 20 years earlier, on June 1, 641 BCE, to correspond with the chronology of the Aid book. In support of this identification it is added that "This earlier eclipse was total (i.e., 12 digits or more) as compared to the very minor ones of only 1-6 digits in 621 BCE" (p. 331:3). This statement proved to me that the author of the Aid article had never read the description records by Ptolemy and checked how this description squares with the alternative identification he presents. Ptolemy's source gave a fairly detailed description of this eclipse, including its magnitude. It is clearly stated that it was a minor one, and that only a fourth of the diameter of the moon was eclipsed. Thus the fact that the eclipse of June 1, 641 BCE, was total does not support the identification, it actually makes it impossible! I find this error all the more remarkable, as the author earlier in his article stresses the importance of knowing if an eclipse was total or not. Other details, too (the month, the day, the time of the night, etc.) make the eclipse of June 1, 641 BCE impossible and establish the eclipse of April 22, 621 BCE as the only possible eclipse that fits the description. (R.R. Newton's recent attempt to "prove" that Ptolemy fabricated some of the eclipses he records seems to have been a mistake: his "evidences" have been rejected by all competent scholars, as far as I know). This is only one of several other errors I have come across on examining the "Chronology" articles in the Aid book. Excuse me for pointing this out, but I hope such errors will be corrected in future editions of this otherwise excellent and extremely valuable Bible dictionary.

ASTRONOMICAL "DIARIES": VAT 4956 - AND BM 32312!

Commenting on VAT 4956, you repeat your earlier argument (Aid, p. 331:8, diecuseed in my treatise, p. 39), that "while the aetronomioal information on this tablet points to the year -567/66 (568-567 B.C.E.), attributing the tablet to the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar may be simply the opinion of a scribe aseembling and dating 'a collection of astronomical observation texte,' working at a 'much leter' period" etc. What you suggest is, that the eetronomical diaries were not originally dated, but that datee (such as the "37th year of Nebuchadnezzar") were inserted in the texte by later copyiste. Is this a plausible explanation, or is it a deeperate attempt to explain away a text, which would otherwise once and for all puncture the 607 BCE date and establieh 587 BCE as the abeolute date for Nebuchadnezzar's 18th regnal ysar?

The aetronomical diaries usually contained very detailed information about the positions of the moon and the five (then known) planete, as well as other information (meteorological events, earthquakee, market prices, and sometimes aleo historical events). As you point out, VAT 4956 is dated from the beginning of the 37th year to the beginning of the 38th year of Nebuchadnezzar, but this is not enough: throughout, almost all events mentioned in the text are dated, giving the month, the day, the time of the day (or night), etc. About forty dates of this kind are given during Nebuchadnezzar's 37th year, and of course it was not necessary to repeat the regnal year at all these places, as this was given at the beginning of each year (as is done aleo in other documents, such as annals and chronicles). Do you really think it is likely that the original texte contained all these dates during a year, but not the regnal years at the beginning of each year? Surely it must be regarded as extremely unlikely that the Babylonian astronomers would leave out such an important detail! All texte of this kind that have been discovered (about 1200 fragments of astronomical diaries have been discovered, a third of which are so well-preserved that they may be dated) are dated to the year of the reigning king. Are all these datee inserted by later copyiete? Most of the diaries cover the period 385 - 60 BCE, but a number of them are copies from earlier perioode. And now I will preeent another diary, older than VAT 4956, that once again confirms the chronology given by the Canon of Ptolemy and refutes the 607 BCE date.

In an article, entitled "Babylonian observational astronomy" and published in Philos. Trans. Royal Soc. London, ser. A. 276 (1974), pp. 43-50, professor Abraham J. Sachs (the scholar who coined the term "diariee" for these texte and without doubt the foremoet authority on aetronomioal diariee living today) givee a short preeentation of the diariee. On p. 48 he mentions that the oldeet datable diary is from the year 652 BCE and says: "I found the astronomical contents to be just barely adequate to make this date virtually certain. It was a great relief when I was able to confirm the date by matching up a historical remark in the diary with the corresponding statement for -651 in a well-dated historical chronicle." (My streee). This seemed to be a text of great importance for the question of the Babylonian chronology, and as the text and a tranelation of it had not yet been published, I wrote to prof. Sachs and asked a couple of queetions:

"1. What information in the diary makes the date -651
'virtually certain'?

"2. What kind of historical remark in the diary corresponds
with what statement in which well-dated chronicle?

In his answer Prof. Sachs gave me all information I had asked for, and even sent me an IBM copy (almost as good as his photograph) of the diary in question, BM 32312. Of special interest is, that your argument that the diaries may have been dated by copyists from a much later period cannot be applied to this diary, as "year as well as month names are broken away", yet, thanks to the historical remark in the diary, this information can be supplied from another source.

Firstly, the year - 652 BCE - is fixed by the astronomical information. Sachs writes: "The preceding astronomical events (Mercury's last visibility in the east behind the Pleiades, Saturn's last visibility behind Pisces, both around the 14th of month I; Mars' stationary point in Scorpio on the 17th of month I; Mercury's first visibility in Pleiades on the 6th of month XII) uniquely determine the date." According to the Canon of Ptolemy, 652 BCE corresponds to the 16th year of Shamashshumukin (the predecessor as king of Babylon of Kandalanu, who was followed by Nebopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar).

Secondly, the diary states that the king of Babylon was involved in a battle at a place called Hirrit on the 27th day of the 12th month. If Ptolemy's chronology is correct, this battle was fought in the 16th year of Shamashshumukin. Can this be confirmed? Yes, it can. As Sachs points out, we find the same information in a well-known chronicle.

The chronicle is the so-called "Akitu Chronicle", BM 86379, latest translated by A. K. Grayson in Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles (1975), pp. 131, 132. The chronicle covers a part of the reign of Shamashshumukin, including his 16th year. Not only is the battle at Hirrit mentioned, but also the day and the month when it was fought, precisely as in the diary. Obv. 13-16 of the chronicle reads:

"On the twenty-seventh day of Adar (= 12th month) the army of Assyria and Akkad did battle in Hirrit. The army of Akkad retreated from the battlefield and a major defeat was inflicted upon them. (However), there were still hostilities (and) wars continued."

I am sure you realize what this new evidence means. The astronomical events described in the diary fix the battle at Hirrit on Adar 27 to the year 652 BCE. The "Akitu Chronicle" clearly shows that this battle at this place on this day was fought in the 16th year of Shamashshumukin. Thus, Shamashshumukin's 16th year was 652 BCE. But this is also the year given by the Canon of Ptolemy for Shamashshumukin's 16th year! Once again, as so many times before, Ptolemy's Canon is confirmed, and this at a point that also, once again, refutes our 607 BCE date. Dating the destruction of Jerusalem in the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar to 607 BCE dislocates all dates before Nebuchadnezzar 20 years. It would, for example, put Shamashshumukin's 16th year in 672 BCE, not in 652 BCE. But this is refuted by this new diary, which is another independent witness supporting the 587 BCE date for the desolation of Jerusalem. Prof. Sachs adds in his letter: "I should perhaps add that the absolute chronology of the regnal years of Shamashshumukin was never in doubt, and it is only confirmed again by the astronomical diary."

For your conveniences, I have enclosed the correspondence with Prof. Sachs and the material he sent me.

THE NABONIDUS HARRAN STELE - AND THE NABONIDUS BABYLON STELE!

Your comments on the Neo-Babylonian chronicles agree with the more detailed information I presented in my treatise, pp. 28, 29, so I will immediately proceed to your objections to the Harran inscription.

You hold that the Harran inscription is open to doubt, because it seems to present a 3-year reign for the Assyrian king Assur-estillu-ili before Nabopolassar, while contrast tablets are dated up to the 4th year of this king. But since Gadd published the translation of the text in 1958, others have examined the difficulties he pointed out and offered solutions to them. The most important studies are the ones by Wolfgang von Soden (ZA, Vol. 58, 1967, pp. 241-255), Joen Oates (lreq, Vol. 28, 1965, pp. 135-159), and Julian Reade (JCS, Vol. 23, 1970, pp. 1-9).

After the death of Assurbanipal of Assyria and Kandalanu of Babylon (these kings might have been identical, Kandalanu being Assurbanipal's Babylonian throne-name) in 627 BCE, Assur-estillu-ili's legitimate right to the throne was opposed by a general, Sin-Shum-lishir, and then by a brother of Assur-estillu-ili, Sin-shar-ishkun. This caused a civil war, and Nabopolassar, a military commander in the south, took advantage of the situation and seized the throne of Babylon. Then, for some years, at least three armies operated at the same time in Babylonia, and it is understandable that a number of the cities changed sides more than once, as it was no longer evident which authority was to be viewed as the legitimate one. The confusing situation is reflected in all documents dated in this period, Assur-estillu-ili being regarded as king in one city while his brother Sin-shar-ishkun was accepted as king in another.

Oates in his article demonstrates that Adda-Guppi, the mother of Nabonidus and a priestess at the Sin-temple in Harran, abandoned Harran in the 3rd year of Assur-estillu-ili and moved to Babylon, but actually, the Harran inscription does not state that this was his last year, as Gadd concluded. From this time onward Adda-Guppi served under Babylonian kings. Reade, who accepts this basic conclusion, demonstrates in his article how all the confusing documents from the period may be harmonized. The solutions offered are in agreement with the Harran inscription, which even has proved to be very helpful in the attempt to reconstruct the events during this chaotic period. There seems to be no reason, therefore, for maintaining an overcritical attitude toward the Harran inscription.

If you still feel there is, then consider the fact that there exists another stele from the reign of Nabonidus, THE NABONIDUS STELE FROM BABYLON (discovered in 1896), that confirms the length of reigns given on the Harran stele for the Babylonian kings! This stele (cf. Gadd, p. 73; I did not deal with this additional evidence in my treatise) was evidently made in the 2nd year of Nabonidus (see the discussion by P.-R. Berger in Die Neubabylonischen Königsinschriften, Vol. I, 1973 p. 110ff.). According to the translation published in Fritchard's AMET, pp. 308-311, this stele states that "the temple e.hul.hul in Harran was in ruins for 54 years", until Nabonidus in the beginning of his reign took measures for restoring it. Now the Harran inscription as well as the chronicle BM 21901 date the destruction of the temple in Harran to the 16th year of Nabopolassar (i.e. 610/609 BCE). In adding up the remaining regnal years up to the beginning of Nabonidus' reign given in the Harran inscription - 5+43+2+4 - we get exactly 54 years! So if you feel the information of the Harran stele should be rejected, what are we to do with the same confirming information given by the Nabonidus Babylon stele? Reject that, too? Why? Should we reject every new evidence that contradicts our theories? Is that a good method? Will it bring us closer to the truth?

THE EGIBI HOUSE TABLETS - AND THOUSANDS OF OTHER CONTRACT TABLETS!

Again, you just repeat the argument from the Aid book (discussed in my treatise, pp. 32, 33) that, though we have many contract tablets from all years of Neo-Babylonian kings represented in the Canon of Ptolemy, there could still be a period of 20 years from which tablets are missing.

You refer to the fact that we have no contract tablets in the Egibi House collection that cover the years 7, 32, 33, 34 and 35, of the Persian king Darius. Well, as Boscawen and other scholars after him have stressed, the firm Egibi and Sons prospered from the time of Nebuchadnezzar up to the time of Darius. The collection of tablets of this firm discovered in 1875-6 ends with Darius. No tablets from the reigns of later kings were discovered in the collection. Tablets in the collection from the end of Darius' reign are sparse. But the reign of Darius began almost two decades after the end of the Neo-Babylonian era. The important thing to consider is, that the tablets cover the reigns of all the Neo-Babylonian kings we know to have existed, not only from the Canon of Ptolemy, but from a number of earlier documents as well, some of which were written contemporary with the Neo-Babylonian period.

Another thing to remember is, that the Egibi tablets are only a part of the many thousands of contract tablets from this period. These other contract tablets, too, give the same length of reigns for the Neo-Babylonian kings! This I also stressed in my treatise, p. 31ff. Every year of the reign of Darius, too, is covered by tablets of this kind, of course.

My argument from this evidence is still left unanswered: If there was an additional period of 20 years during the Neo-Babylonian era, why do we have so many tablets from every year of Neo-Babylonian kings known to have existed, not only from the Canon of Ptolemy, but from all the earlier (and sometimes contemporary) documents, the Harran inscription, the building inscriptions, chronicles, king lists, Beroeue, etc., covering the length of reigns known for these kings - but not one single tablet from the 20-year period you would like to add to the Neo-Babylonian era? And further, Why are the thousands of tablets that must have been written during this supposed 20-year period missing from the same 20-year period that is also missing in all the other documents - and not from another period of 20 years? And further, Why are the tablets missing from a period of exactly 20 years? Why not from 17, 13, 7 - or different years distributed throughout the Neo-Babylonian period? Who travelled around in the Neo-Babylonian kingdom and picked off all the many thousands of business letters dated in this 20-year period and hid or destroyed them, before modern archaeologists started to unearth the temple-archives, public archives, etc. in the ruins of the Babylonian cities? From time to time, new quantities of contract tablets are discovered, translated and - sometimes - published - but the 20-year period we are looking for never turns up. As I formulated the argument in the treatise: "If you are casting a die many thousands of times without ever getting up number six, you will at least have to conclude: 'There is no number six on this die'. The same is true, too, of the missing 20 years we are looking for: They never turn up, because they never existed."

Now, just as you repeated your argument I had answered, I have repeated my argument that was left unanswered.

THE 26TH DYNASTY OF EGYPT: AMASIS AND PSAMMETICHUS III

In "The Gentile Kings Reconsidered", pp. 39-44, I mentioned a number of synchronisms between Egyptian, Babylonian, and Judean rulers, three of which are given by the Bible (2 Kings 23:29; Jer. 46:2, and 44:30). I demonstrated that the Egyptian chronology for this period has been independently established from contemporary Egyptian sources. Yet all synchronisms agree completely with a dating of the destruction of Jerusalem to 587 BCE, while the deviation from the 607 BCE date for this event is consistently about 20 years. The contemporary Egyptian chronology, therefore, presents another independent witness against our 607 BCE date.

In your letter you try to undermine this strong evidence by referring to the conflicting figures given by later historians, Diodorus and Syncellus. But in establishing a chronology the contemporary documents cannot, of course, be refuted, or even questioned, by figures given by historians from a much later period. Their figures have often proved to be distorted, and this distortion usually increases, the farther away from the period these historians lived. As to Manetho, his figures are best preserved by Julius Africanus (221/222 CE; cf. Waddell in Manetho, London 1948, pp. xvi, xvii), and his figures for Amasis and Psammetichus III agree with the contemporary sources, as do also the figures given by Herodotus, the historian who lived closest to the times of Amasis and Psammetichus III (Herodotus was born c. 484 BCE, that is, about 40 years after the reign of Psammetichus III; thus, during his visit to Egypt, Herodotus could even have met individuals, who were born before the reign of Psammetichus III). Diodorus of Sicily, on the other hand, lived during the reigns of Julius Caesar and Augustus, more than 500 years after Psammetichus, and Syncellus wrote his work toward the end of the 8th century CE, or more than 13 centuries after Psammetichus! Do you really think that the figures presented by these two late historians could be used to question figures given by contemporary sources?

Of the historians of the classical (Greek and Roman) period the Aid book states: "All of these lived after the Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian period . . . For the Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods, then, none of these writers present information based on personal knowledge but record, rather, the traditional views they heard, or, in some cases, may have read and copied. . . Not only this, but what we know of their writings is today dependent upon copies of copies, the oldest copy often dating no farther back than the medieval period of the Common Era." (Aid, 332:4,5) The figures you quote from Diodorus and Syncellus, therefore, do not mean much and weigh nothing against contemporary evidence. I quoted Herodotus and Manetho/Africanus only because their figures have been confirmed by modern discoveries of documents, contemporary with the reigns of Amasis and Psammetichus III.

Though Psammetichus III ruled for only six months, you mention that "the highest date available from monuments for this king is year 2". Actually, this information does not contradict a rule of six months for this king, which anyone acquainted with the Egyptian method of reckoning regnal years will easily realize. The Egyptians applied the nonaccession-year system (see my treatise, p. 42, and Appendix A, pp. 88,89), that is, the year in which a king came to power was counted as his first regnal year. Psammetichus III came to power at the end of the year 526 BCE,

probably only a few weeke befor the end of the year. At this time the Egyptian calendar year almost coincided with the Julian calendar year, so Psammetichus ascended to the throne at the end of the Egyptian calendar year, too. Though he ruled for only a fraction of this year, it was (according to the Egyptian noncalendar-year system) reckoned as his first regnal year. His second regnal year, therefore, began only a few weeks after his accession to the throne! If he ruled for only six months, documents dating up to the fifth month of his second regnal year are only what we should expect to find. Actually, we have three documents (papyri) from his second year, dated to the 3rd, 4th, and 5th months of his 2nd year, corresponding to the first half of the year 525 BCE. Then, in May or June, 525 BCE, Psammetichus was dethroned by Cambyses. - See P. K. Kislitz, Die politische Geschichte Ägyptens vom 7. bis zum 4. Jahrhundert vor der Zeitwende, Berlin 1953, p. 156, footnote 7.

Further, you refer to "a document mentioned in the publication Notice des papyrus démotiques archaïques (by Revillout)" that "gives four years of rule to a King Psammetichus that the author claims is Psammetichus III" (my stress). E. Revillout was one of the founders of the publication Revue Egyptologique in the 1870s, and the article you refer to was evidently the one published in Vol. VII, No. II, 1892, pp. 41-44, though I could not find the statement you refer to in that article. But in an article published in Vol. III, No. IV, 1885, pp. 187-191 (and in Vol. VII, No. III, 1896, p. 139) Revillout mentions and quotes a document dated in the 4th year of a King Psammetichus, which he holds to be Psammetichus III. Such a view could still be held at that time, but since then many important documents have been discovered, translated and published that have made Revillout's hypothesis antiquated and obsolete. For example, some of the Apis stelae were translated and published by Breasted in 1906 (Ancient Records of Egypt), the "Petition of Ptahhotep" was published in 1909 (F. Ll. Griffith, Cat. of Demotic papyri, III), the "Demotic Chronicles" in 1914 (W. Spiegelberg, Demotische Studien 7: Die sogenannte Demotische Chronik), and the inscription in Wadi Hammamat was published, too, during this time (H. Gauthier, Le livre de rois d'Egypt, Vol. 4). The three last mentioned documents all give Amasis 44 years of reign. Because of these and other evidences, Revillout's hypothesis can no longer be upheld, and it is not shared by any recent scholar. The document quoted by Revillout, therefore, referred to one of the earlier kings known by the name of Psammetichus.

As to Krall's and Spiegelberg's dates for Psammetichus III (528/527 instead of 526/525 BCE), these scholars, too, were active before the chronology of the 26th dynasty was definitely established (they belong to the later part of the last century and the early part of the twentieth century). The only difficulty among scholars was for a long time if Amasis ruled for 43 or 44 years. This problem was definitely solved in 1957, when Richard A. Parker published his important article "The Length of Reign of Amasis and the Beginning of the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty" in Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Cairo Abteilung, XV, 1957, pp. 208-212. The evidence he presented in support of the year 570 BCE as the 1st year of Amasis was so strong that his conclusion in a very short time obtained general acceptance. I will try to briefly recapitulate it below:

A papyrus in the Louvre collection of papyri, No. 7848, dated to Year 12, I Smw 21 of Amasis (= the 21st day of the 9th month of the Egyptian civil calendar, Pachone) refers to an oeth taken "before Khonsu ... in Year 12, II Smw 13, being the 15th lunar day of (lunar) I Smw."

As is seen, this papyrus is double-dated, giving a date in the 12th year of Amasis both according to the Egyptian civil calendar and according to the lunar calendar. While the civil calendar of 365 days "travels" through the solar year (with approximately one day every fourth year), the lunar calendar, of course, was fixed to the moon, with the 1st day of every month always beginning on the morning of crescent invisibility.

The papyrus quoted above gives the information that in the 12th year of Amasis, the 13th day of II Smw (= Peyni, the 10th month) fell on the 15th day of the lunar month, which means that the 1st day of the lunar month (the morning of crescent invisibility!) fell on I Smw 29 (= the 29th day of the 9th month) of the civil year. Such a situation did not occur every year, of course. With the aid of an astronomical table, such as Herman H. Goldstine's New and Full Moons 1001 BC to AD 1651 (Philadelphia 1973) it is easy to check which years during the 6th century BCE such a situation occurred. Though astronomical tables usually give dates according to the Julian calendar, this is no problem, as the Egyptian calendar dates easily translate into Julian dates. Which year fits the situation described in the papyrus from the 12th year of Amasis?

Parker was able to demonstrate that the year, in which the morning of crescent invisibility fell on I Smw 29 of the Egyptian civil calendar must have been the year 559 BCE (Oct. 5, Julian calendar). Amasis' 1st year, therefore, must have been 570 BCE. This leaves 45 years only for the combined reigns of Amasis and Psammetichus III, prior to Cambyses' conquest of Egypt in May or June, 525 BCE (570-525 = 45). As Amasis ruled for 44 years (chronologically), Psammetichus III must have ruled for 1 year (chronologically). And no matter how you reckon the reigns of Amasis and Psammetichus III, you have to give them a combined reign of 45 years, and the total length of the 26th dynasty is in any case clearly and firmly established.

This is a remarkable confirmation of the reigns of Amasis and Psammetichus III as given by other documents, isn't it? Of course, we will find one or two other years earlier in the 6th century, too, when the lunar month started on I Smw 29, or at least close to that date, but these earlier years do not agree with any other document, or with any of the figures given by later historians either.

Thus, the chronology of the 26th dynasty is firmly and independently established, and the synchronisms given in the Bible clearly point to 587 BCE as the date for the destruction of Jerusalem. Once again, we find an independent witness against our 607 BCE date for that event.

THE 70 YEARS - CAPTIVITY OR SERVITUDE?

On p. 4 of your letter you state that I regard the 70 years as "seventy years of captivity to Babylon", beginning "in the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar", after which you bring forth some arguments against such a view.

Unfortunately, you seem to have misunderstood the view I presented and defended in my treatise. I never made such an application, as a careful reading of the treatise will prove. Though I argued that some captives - including Daniel and his friends, according to Dan. 1:1ff. - were brought to Babylon soon after the battle of Carchemish, I strictly applied the 70 years to a period of servitude, not only for Judah, but also for the surrounding nations, in close agreement with the wording of Jeremiah's prediction ("these nations will have to serve the king of Babylon seventy years", Jer. 25:11). Already from my sub-heading on p. 49 you should have noticed that I stated the issue as "THE SEVENTY YEARS: DESOLATION OR SERVITUDE - WHICH?" - not as "Desolation or captivity". I also noticed that you, in the large-print edition of NW, at the head of p. 826 described the seventy years as the "70 years' servitude", just as I had done.

"Servitude", of course, is not exactly the same thing as "captivity", and it did not mean captivity (or desolation!) for the nations that surrounded Judah, did it? For most nations "servitude" meant yassalage only, though for Judah a part of the servitude came to include a period of both captivity and desolation. I quoted a number of scriptures in support of the fact that the servitude began long before the destruction of Jerusalem (treatise, pp. 49-55), such as Dan. 1:1, Jer. 27, 28, and 35. Others could be added, for instance 2 Kings 24:1, where it is stated of Jehoiakim: "In his days Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon came up, and so Jehoiakim became his servant for three years" etc. When he rebelled, this immediately caused acts of reprisal in order to keep him in subjection. So, even for Judah, the servitude began many years before the destruction of Jerusalem, and - as this text proves - several years before the end of Jehoiakim's reign.

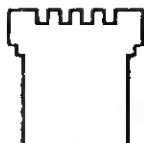
Further you point out that my quotation on p. 51 from Wiseman's translation of the chronicle BM 21946, that Nebuchadnezzar, after the battle at Carchemish, "conquered the whole area of Hatti-country", more correctly, according to Grayson's more recent translation, should read "Ha[m]ath", a district in Hatti (=Syro-Palestine). I am grateful for your correction of this detail (Grayson's recent work was not available to me in 1977). But does it really change anything? On the next page of my treatise (p. 52) I quoted further from the same chronicle: "In the accession-year Nebuchadnezzar went back to the Hatti-land and until the month of Sebat marched unopposed through the Hatti-land; in the month of Sebat he took heavy tribute of the Hatti-territory to Babylon ...". And for Nebuchadnezzar's 1st regnal year the chronicle states: "All the kings of the Hatti-land came before him and he received their heavy tribute." At all these places the word "Hatti" is well preserved in the original, and Grayson, too, of course translates it as "Hatti" ("Hattu"). Isn't it very evident from the chronicle that Nebuchadnezzar subjugated the whole Hatti-territory (= Syro-Palestine) already in his accession-year, and in his 1st regnal year, at the latest, all the kings of the Hatti-land (which reasonably must have included Jehoiakim, too, which is supported by 2 Kings 24:1) were in

vaeallage and paid tribute to Nsbuchadnezzar?

It is interesting to note also the wording in the quotation above: "In his accession-year Nebuchadnezzar went back (Grayson: "returnsd") to the Hatti-land". Evidently, he had been there earlier. Does it not seem very probable that Nebuchadnezzar, after the battle at Carchemish and his conquest of "Hamath", continued southwards and began to subdue the rest of the Hatti-territory, and soon took some captives from the Jews, Phoenicians, and Syrians, as Berossus says? This would be in complete agreement with what is actually (without far-fetched interpretations) stated in Dan. 1:1ff. But during his offensive southwards, Nebuchadnezzar got message of his father's death, which quickly brought him back to Babylon in order to secure the throne. After that - and still in his accession-year, according to the chronicles, - he went back to the Hatti-territory and continued the operations there.

What we learn, both from the Bible and the chronicle, is that the servitude predicted by Jeremiah began very soon after the battle at Carchemish. If some Jewish captives were brought to Babylon at that time or not, is quite another question. Berossus says so, and his statement is confirmed by a natural and literal reading of Dan. 1:1f. and 2:1. I cannot find how Josephus' statement many centuries later that Nebuchadnezzar did not occupy Judah at that time could disprove this. His statement is not in agreement with the Scripture. His statements have often been proved to be in error, and very often he contradicts himself. He does not give the sources for his statement, and it is quite possible that he just gives his own interpretation or guess. If he is right or not does not change the fact that the servitude began in the reign of Josiah, according to the Bible, and in the accession-year of Nebuchadnezzar according to BM 21946.

As I demonstrated in my treatise, all ancient and most reliable documents we have disprove our 607 BCE. Above I have added two additional lines of evidence to the ones presented in the treatise in support of 587 BCE as the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar: (1) the diary BM 32312 and (2) the Nabonidus Stele from Babylon. With all these evidences the Bible agrees: A natural and simple reading of Jsr. 25:10, 11; 29:10; Dan. 1:1; 2:1; Zeph. 1:7-12, and 7:1-5 clearly bring us to the same conclusion. Only by a special interpretation of 2 Chron. 36:20,21 and Dan. 9:2 is it possible to arrive at the conclusion that Jerusalem was destroyed in 607 BCE. But in order to uphold this conclusion we have to reject all the secular documents discussed above and in my treatise, and more than that: We must also re-interpret a number of texts in the Bible itself and give them very unnatural, far-fetched applications. But the evidence against the 607 BCE date is overwhelming. Isn't it curious that we cannot accept this overwhelming amount of unanimous evidence in support of the 587 BCE date (we cannot find one document, or even a line in a document, in support of the 607 BCE date), while we at the same time have accepted another secular date - 539 BCE - on much weaker grounds, and even term it an "absolute date", or a "pivotal date"? For about twenty years the "Nabonidus Chronicle" was referred to in support of the 539 BCE date, but since this evidence was rejected (in The Watchtower, May 15, 1971, p. 316), our only "evidence" for the date is the Canon of Ptolemy (!) and an Olympiadic date referred to by the late historians Diodorus, Africanus, and Eusebius! - Aid, p. 328:7 and 408:9.



WATCHTOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC.

CABLE WATCHTOWER

117 ADAMS STREET, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11201, U.S.A. PHONE (212) 625-1240

EF:ESA May 15, 1980

*EF - Fred Rusk
Writ. Dept.*

Mr. Carl Olof Jonsson
... Sweden

Dear Brother Jonsson:

Your letter of March 31 and the enclosures have been received by the Writing Department of the Society. The additional information and observations are appreciated.

As we mentioned in our letter of February 28, 1980, any answer you might wish to make to our letter would be read and given careful consideration. Time has not allowed for us to give your latest letter that promised attention right at this time. But it is not being ignored. Your research is being added to what we have already accumulated on Bible chronology. Your research has led you to the conclusion that certain adjustments should be made in the chronology set forth in the Society's publications. You feel very strongly about this, but it is in order to caution you that such can prove to be a snare to you if great care is not exercised. We are sure you appreciate that it would not be appropriate for you to begin to state your views and conclusions on chronology that are different than those published by the Society so as to raise serious questions and problems among the brothers. Can you wait upon Jehovah? We invite you to do so. He will not leave any question of this nature in serious doubt. Some adjustments may be necessary in the matter of chronology, but it would not be appropriate to make any adjustments without taking every pertinent piece of information into consideration and weighing this carefully and prayerfully in the light of the Scriptures. Up to now we have not seen that the evidence is so strong that there should be a major adjustment, as you suggest. Definite questions have been raised. There is a basis for further and detailed study of the matter. This is being done. Meanwhile, we recommend that you have confidence in Jehovah and the organization he is obviously using. Do not try to undermine it or raise doubts in the minds of the brothers and sisters by making chronology the big thing in their lives. Help them to appreciate the love of Jehovah and what he has done in sending his Son to provide the ransom sacrifice. Build faith and let your good works in preaching the "good news" and in helping others recommend you. Do not let this matter of questions on chronology cause you to weaken in faith and lose out on opportunities to be of real value to your brothers and in the congregation.

Mr. Carl Olof Jonsson

May 15, 1980

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We have noted your offer to be of further assistance to the Society in the event further clarification or assistance is needed in the study of Bible chronology. If you keep your balance in this regard there is the possibility that you might be of service to the Society in this study sometime in the future. But if you prove to be just a critic, even the good you are trying to accomplish will not prove out to be constructive and helpful. You are interested in the truth being presented in the publications, but you can be assured that our desire in this regard is no less than your own. But if any adjustments need to be made, as we mentioned above, it is our resolve that these be made only after all factors have been carefully and prayerfully considered, and often such an analysis requires a good measure of time.

So we stress again the need on your part, Brother Jonsson, to wait upon Jehovah as we all bend every effort to prove faithful to him. Receiving an inheritance in his new system of things is the important thing. And as we walk with his people on the roadway that leads to life, we want to aid still others to avail themselves of Jehovah's provisions in this day of Jehovah's salvation. May Jehovah bless your sincere desire to serve him and prove to be a very useful and honorable vessel to his praise.—2 Tim. 2:20, 21.

We take this occasion to send an expression of our Christian love and best wishes.

Your brothers in Jehovah's service,

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